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SUBJECT: CODEL DREIER IN KENYA: MEETING WITH VICE PRESIDENT
AWORI

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: CODEL Dreier and Vice President Moody Awori engaged in a comparative exchange on how business is conducted in the U.S. and Kenyan legislatures on July 5 in Nairobi. In his capacity as Leader of Government Business, Awori informed the visiting delegation of the Kenyan Parliament's committee system and his own role as the chair of the House Business Committee. Awori also detailed current reform initiatives. CODEL Dreier is in Kenya as part of the U.S. House of Representatives Democracy Assistance Commission (HDAC) program. END SUMMARY.

COMMITTEE MECHANICS

12. (SBU) The Vice President of Kenya wears many hats, Moody Awori explained to the visiting members of CODEL Dreier. In addition to being the President's deputy, the VP is also the Leader of Government Business, for which he is the Chair of the House Business Committee. In this role, Awori is responsible for ensuring that the Parliamentary calendar is respected, determines how best to pursue the government's agenda in the legislature, and oversees official travel by MPs. In addition, he must recommend to the House the membership of committees, both departmental, which are constituted for the full 5 year term of a Parliament, and the sessional, which are renewed each year.

13. (SBU) The operation and membership of each of these committees is guided by specific parameters. Two, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and the Public Investments Committee (PIC) must be chaired by opposition members, specifically the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Chief Opposition Whip, respectively. As oversight committees, the PIC and the PAC set their own agendas. Other than his own House Business Committee, Awori noted that no cabinet member may chair departmental or sessional committees. They may be led by any member who is elected by the rest of the committee. Each party nominates MPs for committee membership. Parties are given representation on each committee depending on their numbers in Parliament. Committees also review and amend proposed legislation relevant to their mandate.

PARLIAMENT LEADING THE WAY ON REFORM

14. (SBU) Among reforms currently being implemented in Parliament, Awori noted the newly created House Parliamentary Service Committee, which looks after the interests of MPs, and the welfare and training of staff. The Budget Office,

once established, will enable a committee of MPs to provide input into the budget drafting process. Under the current system, the budget is prepared by the Ministry of Finance and only later debated in Parliament. Awori hoped this new procedure would be in place for next year's budget. Also for next year, the VP was optimistic that Parliament would be able to set its own schedule. Currently, the executive determines when the House meets, and can dissolve Parliament at his discretion. Achieving this reform, however, would require a constitutional amendment. Another change under consideration would remove the requirement for candidates for president and vice president to be elected as MPs simultaneously; rather they would run at-large.

15. (SBU) Illustrating the Kibaki government's commitment to reform, Awori highlighted two significant reforms already implemented: free primary education, and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). The VP noted that as a result of the free primary education program, an additional 1.7 million students (not all youngsters necessarily) had enrolled in school. The CDF, he continued, is "revolutionary," in that it gives 2.5 percent of each year's budget to each MP's constituency, the expenditure of which is determined by a local committee. The innovation here, Awori commented, is that for the first time, local priorities are being determined by local residents. Awori also emphasized Parliament's commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS and providing Anti-retroviral (ARVs) drugs to those afflicted. Finally, because reform is not static, Parliament's standing orders are reviewed every 7 to 8 years.

EXCHANGE IN ACTION

16. (SBU) Representative Dreier emphasized that the purpose of the Democracy Assistance Commission is, through just such an interaction, to provide an example of how a different democratic system operates. For example, he noted, in the U.S. Congress, all committees fill an oversight role over the executive. In contrast to Parliament's review of standing orders every several years, Representative Dreier explained, the House Rules Committee looks at the rules package at the end of each year.

17. (U) CODEL Dreier has not cleared this message.
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